MMR_0552 Gary Butts. PSR

Gary has own HO railroad named "The Gary and Sandy Railroad." The G & S Railroad is proof of the notion that smaller can be just as much fun. Our little layout is the culmination of over 30 years of tinkering with model trains. The G & S is the third layout of similar size that Sandy and I have built over our many years together.

The first never made it to sophisticated scenery but was built before we were married in the small basement of her parents' home in Long Beach, California. Not many homes in California have basements but this house, built in the 'teens, did. The layout was HO and not too sophisticated, but did have block detection and occupancy lighting thanks to some crude circuitry designed by yours truly. More into modeling than operations, a small layout fills the bill for us, and having an under utilized "front room" in our house provides the perfect place for the pike.

A few years ago we decided that since the layout was located near the front entrance to our house and, after all, it was in our front room, we should try and dress it up. To that end, we draped the layout's legs with a velour skirt to hide all of the model train paraphernalia underneath and made a tilt up varnished mahogany bar with a clear plexi-glass splash shield on two sides of the layout.

The advent of DCC train control and subsequent wiring

conversion to accommodate operation with both DC and DCC modes has actually made for some interesting "micro" operating sessions. With three DCC cabs, operation centers around avoiding collisions with other "slightly lubricated" engineer's trains as they go about their business of picking up and dropping cars spotted around the layout.

In any case, we can say that essentially 100% of the models on the G & S have been made from scratch or kits. This includes structures, cars and engines. The earlier engines and car kits came from Mantua, Round House, and the like. We still have the first HO Manuta "General" 4-4-0 engine kit I built after selling my whole Lionel equipped layout when I was 12 years old. Lately, we have been drawn to the newer "craftsman" style structure and car kits being produced using laser cutting techniques.

The G & SRR is a been negotiated with the up-canyon logging operations of the KJ Lumber Company. Their engines can be regularly seen dragging log cars and empty bogies through town on their way to and from the operations. The steep grades associated with the climb up to Chantey Springs required that the railroad convert a couple of logging style geared locomotives to passenger service to drag the short passenger cars up the steep grade to the town.

The green paint style associated with the G & S livery makes for unusual but welcome geared engine sightings in and around the completely free-lance railroad set somewhere in the 1890-1920's. We sort of run whatever we want or anybody brings over but generally try to keep our scenery and rolling stock to the Steam era. The location for the layout setting is somewhere in the California Sierra mountain foothills.

Our fictitious railroad services passenger and freight traffic to the small town of Chantey Springs up the hill from the

surrounding flatlands. Trackage and repair facility rights have G&S territory. Chantey Springs, located as it is in the foothills, gives the locals an opportunity for some great fishing in Vern pond at the bottom of the grade.

The pond is a favorite gathering spot for ducks and swans and those wanting a few hours away from work in the small G & S maintenanceof-way yard. You can usually find the same few old hands gathered around the fruit stand in their usual places shooting the breeze or dipping a pole. A couple of the local residents live close to town and Paul and Mary's cabin is just over the trestle near Ron's pond. Paul can almost always be found on the rocks fishing this secluded pond near his cabin.

The area around the Cabin makes for some fine weekend camping and you can count on a tent or two in this pleasant setting overlooking the G & S yard. The new double trestle over the G & S right of way and valley tributary creek was built by the KJ Lumber Company to provide an alternate way down out of the mountains when needed. Across the cut, the homestead of the Rigney family is also located near town and laundry can normally bee seen drying outside on most sunny days.

Water for the small orange grove that they have somehow managed to get to grow at the town's elevation is brought up from the ground using the tried and true windmill to power the pump. Furlow's handles most of the freight requirements for the town and they truck goods up the hill after unloading the heavy freight cars at their facility on the flats. Passenger traffic however, waits for the daily at the small station located handily right on main street in Chantey.

Smaller packages and personal freight is loaded in the baggage combine that G & S brings up the grade. Rail fanning can be good around the water tower situated on the long siding just out

of town. Freight trains often stop on the siding here to allow the high profile passenger trains the mainline right of way.

Just across the tracks, under the curved trestle just west of town you can find the local hobo contingency gathered around their continuously burning campfire. The old abandoned mine up above the railroad cut was the original reason for the existence of Chantey Springs. Long ago played out, the mine still attracts curious hikers up from Vern Lake to have a look.

Our G & S layout features lighting in most of the buildings and work areas including a couple of scratch built Coleman type lanterns. An 8 channel sound system is installed with background sounds emanating from the forests, waterfalls, campfires, taverns, workshops, etc. with individual speakers imbedded and hidden on the layout at appropriate locations. All of our turnouts are electrically controlled from a single control panel shared by the train engineers.

LED indicators show the position of the individual turnouts and since the layout also supports DC operation, the condition of the various track blocks are also shown with LEDs on the control panel. The turnout switch machines are a mixture of old Twin Coil, Cobalt and even a couple of Atlas actuators.

Track is entirely code 100 nickel silver with both flex and hand laid track and turnouts. A pair of dual Frog Juicers wired to a hidden hand-laid dual crossover handles train direction reversing on the layout We are continuing to build and add details to the layout as time permits and have drawings in hand that would allow us to expand the current layout to double its size.
Who knows? It could happen……

The Gary and Sandy Railroad

KJ Lumber #64 hauls a work train over the double trestle on its way across the valley